

"I Got My Rights" 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

Introduction

- I want to begin this morning with a story. This very short story summarizes my intent with the sermons the past three weeks. "Fire, Water, and Reputation went on a journey together. Before starting, they thought it would be well to arrange how they should find one another in case they should get separated. Fire said: 'Wherever you see smoke, there you will find me.' Water said: 'Wherever the grass is the greenest, there you will find me.' But Reputation said: 'Beware how you lose me, for a lost reputation is not easily recovered.'"¹
- As the church, as God's people who have been called out of darkness to live in the light, our reputation is all we have. Over the past three weeks many of you commented about the sermons. The only way to get our reputation back is through repentance. Let me just say in response to what you're hearing and what you're reading in 1 Corinthians, don't stifle that inner conviction. It is critically important that when the Spirit of God prompts us to do something that we do it. Don't wait. If over the past three weeks God has convicted you that something in your life needs to change the time to make that change was yesterday. That moment of conviction won't last forever. The Spirit will only woo our hearts for a time and then, if we don't respond, he'll stop. Don't harden your heart.
- If this church is going to have a significant impact on this community its going to start with deep repentance. In order to reverse things and get our reputation back we are going to have to delight more in God and the life of the cross than in what this world has to offer. Our reputation is all we have. Without it we have nothing unique to offer the world around us.
- The message this week is very much a continuation of the messages from the previous weeks. Paul wants the lives of the Corinthians to look different than they look. He wants the biggest imprint on their lives to be the cross not the culture. His greatest concern is that they apply the cross to every area of life—marriage, church relationships, everything. The cross is Paul's answer to the Corinthian dilemma. The cross means self-sacrifice. The cross means accountability. The cross may mean church discipline. And by analogy, since we are just like the Corinthians having become so like the world ourselves, the cross is the answer to our dilemma.
- The specific Corinthian dilemma in chapter 6 is lawsuits. Look at [verse 6](#). *If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints?* The phrase translated *has a dispute* in the NIV? It's a technical term for a lawsuit, or legal action."² I think what this passage has in mind is using the court system to settle any kind of dispute or disagreement between two people. Let me say right up front that this passage has nothing to say about what to do when there is a dispute between a Christian and a non-Christian. This passage doesn't go there. Nor does this passage forbid the use of the secular court system altogether. Christians aren't barred from taking legal action. Paul himself used the courts to his advantage in order to spread the gospel throughout the whole Mediterranean World. But. What I think this passage teaches is that under no circumstances

¹ Dorothy Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church*, p. 207.

² Fee, p. 231.

whatsoever should a Christian use the court system to gain an advantage over and against another Christian. What Paul is decidedly against in this passage is Christians taking legal actions against other Christians in a court of law. I think that Paul's point is that in light of the cross...

Proposition

- **Our disputes as Christians should look different than they look**
- When Christians disagree with each other. When one Christian wrongs another Christian. When Christians have disputes with other Christians the way those disputes are resolved should look dramatically different than the way the world resolves its disputes. The way we resolve disputes, if shaped and informed by the cross of Christ, should make us distinct and unique and salty in a country where lawsuits are part of the fabric of society. We're Americans. It's what we do right? We sue each other to get our piece of the pie. As Christians, **our disputes as Christians should look different than they look.**
- I think most of us know litigation is an epidemic in this country. We live in the most litigious society in the world—maybe in the history of the world. Everybody sues everybody. If you've been wronged in any way the first order of business is to take legal action. McDonalds makes you fat. Take 'em to court. Apply the pressure. Turn the screws. Let 'em feel the hurt. Did you know that Japan has 5,800 people per lawyer? The US? 270 people per lawyer. Or to put it another way, Japan has 22,000 licensed attorneys; the United States has more than 1,000,000.³
- Just to show you how bad things have gotten. In 2004 a man [Donald Drusky](#) took God to court. In 1968 Drusky was fired by his employer, the steelmaker USX. He fought them for 30 years and got nowhere. So he decided to take legal action against God. The suit read as follows: *The defendant, God, is the sovereign ruler of the universe and took no corrective action against the leaders of his church and his nation for their extremely serious wrongs, which ruined the life of Donald S. Drusky.* For damages, Drusky asked for the return of his youth, the skill of a great guitarist, and the resurrections of his mother and pet pigeon. Drusky hoped that God would fail to appear in court, allowing him to win the case by default. Obviously his case was declared frivolous and thrown out by a Syracuse court.⁴
- You don't think that in a culture where stories like this aren't all that unusual there's an opportunity for Christians to handle their disputes differently and by their actions point to Christ? **Our disputes as Christians should look different than they look.**

Transition

God's word is so realistic. Reality is that none of us are as Christ-like as we ought to be. Even the most mature Christians rub one another the wrong way sometimes. When you live in community, when you share life, when you're accountable to one another which presumes some kind of intimate personal relationship, when you live sacrificially—giving not out of your abundance but out of your poverty—even in the best of circumstances disputes among fallen, sinful Christians are bound to happen. The thing is, when they do how do we handle them? What if the wrong is really bad? What should a Christian do? I think this passage suggests...

³ *Wall Street Journal.*

⁴ www.preachigntoday.com, submitted by Ed Rotz as found in *Servant* (Issue 70, 2004), p. 9.

Organizational Sentence

- **Three courses of action to take when you've been wronged**

Transition

Look at [verses 1-6](#) and the first course of action Paul suggests. Follow along. *If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! 5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers!*

Main Points

- I think the first thing a Christian needs to do; above all else, when she has a dispute with another Christian is to **keep the matter a family affair**. The commercial says what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas. What happens in the church stays in the church. What happens in the family stays in the family. First course of action? Keep the matter a family affair. It's shameful for Christians to air their dirty laundry through the court system. Litigation simply shouldn't happen between Christians. Why?
- Theologically, the reason why Christians are not to initiate legal action against other Christians is spelled out in [verse 2](#). *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!* Isn't this promise amazing? At the end of all things Christians, the saints, will serve as judges in God's trial of humanity. And more than that Christians will even judge angels. Paul's point is that if ultimately we're qualified enough to handle these gargantuan future responsibilities then, having the Spirit of God within us, we're definitely qualified to judge trivial earthly disputes—like disputes between two people who know and love the Lord.
- So what does he suggest they do? [Verse 4](#). **Keep the matter a family affair**. Appoint judges from within the church to handle the dispute. Don't air the dirty laundry through the court system. Keep the dispute in house. And to really goad them he says to appoint the least qualified in the church. In other words, even the least qualified among you, even they have the Spirit, which makes them overqualified to handle this trivial matter between two Christians. Isn't there somebody among you, Paul says, who is wise enough to handle the matter? Of course there is. Stupid Corinthians. Shame on you. *I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers!*
- Paul's whole point has to do with witness. What's more important than hurt feelings or lost or damaged property or money that might be gained through some kind of legal action is how the unbelieving world perceives Christ through the actions of those who act in his name. The moment a dispute between two Christians spills out into the courts the fight that really matters is lost. The church loses. Christ loses. Jump ahead and look at [verse 7](#). *The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already.* Whether through the legal action you win or lose, it doesn't matter. God says you've already

lost. As [Leon Morris](#) puts it, "[Paul] is not complaining that believers would not obtain justice in heathen courts, but saying that they had no business being there at all."⁵ **Keep the dispute a family affair.** Settle it in house by means of church appointed judges.

- I can think of countless instances when Christians who love and read their bibles act as if this passage didn't exist. Churches are sued. Pastors are sued. Ministries are sued. Christian husbands and wives sue each other through divorce proceedings. Please know and understand. If you have something dispute worthy. Talk to the leadership of this church. We'll do everything we can to solve your dispute. We'll find someone to arbitrate or mediate and keep the thing out of the courts. Our culture says that if you've been wronged you have a right to get yours. All I have to say is that for Christians there is a better way.

Transition

[Verses 7-8](#) describe the second course of action. Does the better way mean it's an easier way? No. Not in the least. In a rights oriented society like ours, where we are programmed to fight for our rights, I think these two verses show us how utterly foreign the way of the cross really is. *The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? 8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.* The second course of action? **Choose to be wronged.** Choose to be wronged.

- Christianity is all about giving up one's rights. Most legal actions on the part of Christians are predicated on some kind of 'rights.'⁶ "I got my rights man." The Christian life, on the other hand, the way of the cross is a voluntary relinquishing of one's rights.⁷ That's what Jesus taught his disciples, right? Luke 6:29-30 *If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.* Choose to be wronged. Choose to be cheated. That is the countercultural way of the cross. That is the lifestyle that God has called you to in Jesus Christ. In your disputes, don't fight for your rights. Instead, choose to be taken advantage of. Give up your rights. Choose to be wronged. Isn't this way of life completely foreign to us? Might this be part of the reason we look so much like the world around us? We don't give up our rights? We don't choose to be wronged? We don't choose to be cheated?
- The thought of relinquishing our rights, of choosing to be wronged is, I think, anathema to us as Americans. According to [Thomas Jefferson](#) and the Declaration of Independence we've been endowed with certain unalienable rights. And our Constitution guarantees what? A Bill of Rights. I'm not knocking those rights in the least. They're fabulous. But the problem is that we've grown up in a culture where preserving rights and extending rights and fighting for rights is the norm. And the culture we've been redeemed into calls us to relinquish our rights. At some point something has to give. And too frequently what we've given up on has been the way of the cross.
- Can you imagine? What if? Play along with me. "Four days after his death, a man from Jerusalem who was brutally tortured and murdered without cause, but now is alive again,

⁵ Morris, p. 90.

⁶ Fee, p. 238.

⁷ Blomberg, p. 120.

filed a wrongful death suit against Roman officials, Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders." It's absurd. That just sounds wrong. How is it that things have gotten so twisted and distorted that now the part about choosing to be wrong sounds just as absurd? Why does being cheated sound okay for Jesus but not for you? Why does being wronged sound okay for Jesus but not for you?

- The author [Leonard Sweet](#) tells the following story. "Tom Wiles served a stint as university chaplain at Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, Arizona. A few years ago, he picked me up at the Phoenix airport in his new Ford pickup and whisked me away to keynote a leadership conference at the university. Since I was still mourning the trade-in of my Dodge truck, we immediately bonded, sharing truck stories and laughing at the bumper-sticker truism: "Nothing is more beautiful than a man and his truck." As I climbed into his 2002 Ranger for the ride back to the airport a day later, I noticed two big scrapes by the passenger door. "What happened here?" I asked. "My neighbor's basketball post fell and left those dents and white scars," Tom replied with a downcast voice. "You're kidding! How awful," I commiserated. "This truck is so new I can smell it."
- "What's even worse is my neighbor doesn't feel responsible for the damage." Rising to my newfound friend's defense, I said, "Did you contact your insurance company? How are you going to get him to pay for it?" "This has been a real spiritual journey for me," Tom replied. "After a lot of soul-searching and discussions with my wife about hiring an attorney, it came down to this: I can either be in the right, or I can be in a relationship with my neighbor. Since my neighbor will probably be with me longer than this truck, I decided that I'd rather be in a relationship than be right."⁸
- 1 Peter 2:19-21. *For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. 20 But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. 21 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.* When you've been wronged, Christian or non-Christian, your mission is to choose the way of the cross. Choose to be wronged. And you will be different.

Transition

Let's look now at the third course of action. [Verses 9-11](#). **When tempted to take legal action, remember what's at stake.** *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* Remember what's at stake.

- Verses 9-11 contain a strict warning. Paul lumps in this practice of taking other Christians to court with all these other vices: *sexually immorality, idolatry, adultery, male prostitution, homosexuality, thievery, greediness, drunkenness, slandering, swindling*. And he says to the Corinthians that if they persist with this behavior of using the courts to solve disputes they

⁸ Leonard Sweet, *Out of the Question...Into the Mystery* (Waterbrook Press, 2004), p. 91-92; submitted to [preachingtoday.com](#) by Michael Batdorf, Harrisburg, Illinois.

are in danger of not inheriting the kingdom like all these other kinds of people. I like [Gordon Fee's](#) take. He says, "By persisting in the same behavior as those already destined for judgment [the Corinthians] are placing themselves in the very real danger of that same judgment. If it were not so, then the warning is no warning at all."⁹

- Whether it's this issue of lawsuits or anything else really, our holiness as God's people matters. On the one hand, yes it is about looking different than the rest of the world. It is about preserving our distinct witness as the people of God, our reputation as Christ's ambassadors. But most importantly, we've got to **remember what's at stake**. Remembering should serve as a deterrent. It's not enough to profess Christ with your mouth and for your life to not change. Your eternal destiny is secure as long as you continue to take hold of and grasp for that which is yours in Christ. Philippians 3:12, right? *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.* And 1 Timothy 6:12. Paul says to Timothy *take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.* Hebrews warns us that those not all who were delivered by through the Exodus entered the rest of the Promised Land. Some by disobedience failed to enter. The warning still stands for us. *Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.* Hebrews 4:11.
- Being a Christian means actively, daily choosing by faith to want the eternal life God promises—that's taking hold of—more than giving in to whatever sin you're tempted with. It's choosing the way of the cross—even at great personal cost—over choosing to live like the rest of the world. And in the particular case of 1 Corinthians 6 that means being cheated and wronged so that our response to those who wrong us looks like Jesus' response to those who wronged him. Keep the matter a family affair. Choose to be wronged. Remember what's at stake.

Conclusion

- I love how this passage ends. Could Paul be more encouraging? Consider your own deficiencies when it comes to the way of the cross and glory in [verse 11](#). *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.* The reality is, if you're a Christian you really are different. It may not always show on the outside but on the inside. Just remember the good work that's been started. Washed. Through baptism we have symbolically died to sin like Christ died and we've been washed clean from those sins. Sanctified. Through Jesus we've been set apart to be different. Freaks and geeks for Christ if you will. Justified. In exchange for our sins, this is the best news in the world, we've been declared not guilty and instead, have been given Christ's perfect righteousness as our very own. On the inside we really are different. Now make the outside way of life match. Embrace the bizarre, unique, distinct, unfathomable, difficult, glorious way of the cross as your way.

⁹ Fee, p. 242.

Grammatical/Syntactical/Semantic Observation

1.

Historical/Cultural/Generic Observations

1.

Theological/Structural/Text Critical Observations

1.

Greek Translation

1 Cor 6:1 Tolma'/ ti" uJmw'n pra'gma e[cwn proV" toVn e{teron krivnesqai ejpiV tw'n

Dare someone among you has a dispute against another to judge before the
ajdivkwn kaiV oujciV ejpiV tw'n aJgivwn;
unrighteous and not before the saints?

2 h] oujk oi[date o{ti oiJ a{gioi toVn kovsmon krinou'sin; kaiV eij ejn uJmi'n krivnetai oJ kovsmo",

Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world,
ajnavxioiv ejste krithrivwn ejlacivstwn;
Are you unworthy as judges of trivial matters?

3 oujk oi[date o{ti ajggevlou" krinou'men, mhvti ge biwtikav;

Do you not know that we will judge angels, indeed even the things of life?

4 biwtikaV meVn ou\nn krithrvia ejaVn e[chte, touV" ejxouqenhmevnou" ejn th'/ ejkklhsiva/, touvtou"

If you have little matters to judge then, those that are despised in the church, are they to
kaqivzete;

sit as judges?

5 proV" ejntrophVn uJmi'n levgw. ou{tw" oujk e[ni ejn uJmi'n oujdeiV" sofov", o}" dunhvsetai

I say this to shame you. Is there no wise person among you, who is able to

diakri'nai ajnaV mevson tou' ajdelfou' aujtou';

judge between his brother?

6 ajllaV ajdelfoV" metaV ajdelfou' krivnetai kaiV tou'to ejpiV ajpivstwn;

But brother against brother, with brother going to court and this before unbelievers?

7 [Hdh meVn (ou\nn) o{lw" h{tthma uJmi'n ejstin o{ti krivmata e[cete meq= eJautw'n. diaV tiv oujciV

That you have lawsuits amongst means that already you have failed. Why not

ma'llon ajdikei'sqe; diaV tiv oujciV ma'llon ajposterei'sqe;

rather be mistreated? Why not rather be defrauded?

8 ajllaV uJmei'" ajdikei'te kaiV ajposterei'te, kaiV tou'to ajdelfouv".

Instead you cheat and defraud, even these brothers.

9]H oujk oi[date o{ti a[dikoi qeou' basileivan ouj klhronomhvsousin; mhV plana'sqe: ou[te

Do you not know that he unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Don't be deceived,

povrnoi ou[te eijdwlolavtrai ou[te moicoiV ou[te malakoiV ou[te ajrsenokoi'tai

Neither the sexually immoral or idolators or adulterers or male prostitutes or homosexuals

10 ou[te klevptai ou[te pleonevktai, ouj mevqusoi, ouj loivdoroi, oujc a{rpage" basileivan

Or thieves or greedy, not the drunkard, nor slanderers, not robbers will inherit

qeou' klhronomhvsousin.

The kingdom of God.

11 kaiV tau'tav tine" h\te: ajllaV ajpelouvsasqe, ajllaV hJgiavsqhte, ajllaV ejdikaiwvqhte ejn tw'/

And this is what you were, but you were cleansed, but you were made holy, but you were justified by the

ojnovmati tou' kurivou jlhsou' Cristou' kaiV ejn tw'/ pneuvmati tou' qeou' hJmw'n.

name of the Lord Jesus Christ and b the spirit of our God.

1. Notes from Reinecker's *Linguistic Key to the New Testament*

- Nothing

2. Wallace *Greek Grammar*

- noth

3. Notes from DBI

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4. Notes from NDBT

- "The issue of taking a fellow-believer to law most probably presupposes a social situation in which local civil magistrates could readily be influenced by networks of patronage, or the socially strong. Hence the ethical issue in 6:1-11 turns not on going to law a such, but more probably on manipulation non the part of the socially strong to exploit more vulnerable fellow-believers."¹⁰

4. Notes from NIDNT

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5. Carson, Moo and Morris

- In speaking of their being God's *georgion* (God's cultivated field) and of Paul and Apollos and others as God's workers in the field (1Cor 3:6-9), the apostle brings to the minds of the Corinthians the farming going on in the plain below the city. There the land was plowed, the crops reaped, the grapevines tended, and the grapes gathered—a crop "for which Corinth has for centuries been famous (our word `currant' is a medieval corruption for Corinth)."
- Deals with profound internal divisions and misapprehensions as to the nature of Christian leadership.¹¹
- Corinth was located on the isthmus that connects the Peloponnese with the rest of Greece.
- It was a wealthy city. Known for its debauchery prior to its destruction in 146 BC. "Clay votives of human genitals have come down to us from the old city. They were offered to Asclepius, the god of healing, in the hope that that part of the body, suffering from venereal disease, would be healed."¹²
- Paul first preached in Corinth on his second missionary journey
- He worked as a tentmaker and lived with Aquila and Priscilla.
- He wrote from Ephesus.
- Apollos followed on Paul's work.
- Spiritually immature Christians formed partisan groupings. (1 cor. 1:11)
- The whole church was dissatisfied with Paul's leadership (1 cor. 4:3)
- Abuses of the Lord's Table (11:17)
- At least one notorious case of spiritual immorality (1 cor 5:1-5)
- Public litigation among members (1 cor 6)
- Uncertainties about the place of marriage (chap 7)
- Questions about foods sacrificed to idols (chap 8)
- Infatuation with the more spectacular of the charismatic gifts without any profound commitment to mutual love (chaps 12-14)
- And an aberrant view of the resurrection (chap 15).

¹⁰ NDBT, p. 300.

¹¹ Carson, Moo and Morris.

¹² Carson, Moo and Morris.

- This is probably Paul's second letter (see 1 cor. 5:9)
- And he hears reports while in Ephesus from Chloe's household and factions.
- The heart of the Corinthian opposition is this. They are convinced they are spiritual but aren't.
- Sophist movement is behind the opposition to Paul's ministry. "It was characterized by rhetors whose skill and training in oratory attracted public admiration, not to mention students to their schools...it was their power to expatiate [philosophy], to declaim it in public assembly, to speak convincingly and according to strict conventions in legal, business, religious, and political contexts that won them their acclaim...They thought themselves wise, the purveyors of wisdom."¹³

6. Dictionary of New Testament Background

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7. Notes from Fee

- "The phrase translated 'has a dispute' is a technical term for a lawsuit, or legal action; and the verb *krino* ('judge') in the middle voice can carry the sense of 'going to law,' or 'bringing something for judgment,' as it does here. Thus we are dealing with a recurring phenomenon in huan society, namey that someone who has been wronged seeks adjudication in the courts."¹⁴
- Litigation should be a last resort even with non-Christians. "Only if it is out of concern for the one defrauded and for all others who might be so taken in" is it fully justified."¹⁵
- "So inclusive will be our participation in God's eschatological judgment that not only the world but even the angels will be judged by the newly formed eschatological people of God."¹⁶
- Verse 4 is probably better translated as thus:
- "As with so much that has been said up to this point, Paul is trying to help the Corinthians see their true condition over against their perceived one. A trial between two brothers before pagan courts is no 'innocent' matter; it reveals how poorly they understand their true place in Christ."¹⁷
- Speaking of verse 6-ff and the man (Plaintiff) "Whether you win or lose, the action itself is already a loss. For even if you win, you lose by not being able to endure injury, and the church loses by your action before the public tribunal."¹⁸
- "Paul warns not only the man but the whole community, that if they persist in the same evil as the wicked they are in the same danger of not inheriting the kingdom. By persisting in the same behavior as those already destined for judgment they are placing themselves in the very real danger of that same judgment. If it were not so, then the warning is no warning at all."¹⁹
- Male prostitute. Means soft or effeminate and most likely referred to the younger, passive partner in a homosexual relationship.²⁰ A consenting homosexual youth.

¹³ Carson, Moo and Morris.

¹⁴ Fee, p. 231.

¹⁵ Fee, p. 238.

¹⁶ Fee, p. 234.

¹⁷ Fee, p. 237.

¹⁸ Fee, p. 240.

¹⁹ Fee, p. 242.

²⁰ Fee, p. 243.

- "Now that you are in Jesus Christ you are something different, so live like it. Stop defrauding, living in sexual sin, etc., because you are no longer among those who do."²¹
- "Security in Christ there is, to be sure, but it is a false security that would justify sinners who have never taken seriously 'but such *were* some of you.' That is to whitewash the sinner without regeneration or transformation; Paul simply would not understand such theology."²²

8. Notes from Leon Morris

- "He is not complaining that believers would not obtain justice in heathen courts, but saying that they had no business being there at all."²³
- If believers are qualified to judge angels they are qualified to judge more trivial matters.
- V. 6. "It is extraordinary that brother should want to go to law with brother at all. But if he did, it was even more extraordinary that he should do so before *unbelievers*."²⁴
- "The gaining of a verdict matters little. The cause is already lost when a Christian institutes a lawsuit."²⁵
- "More biting questions drive home the point that a real victory might be obtained rather by choosing to be wronged, to be cheated. Jesus taught his followers to turn the other cheek, and, when sued at law for their tunic, to yield up their cloak as well (Matthew 5:39-40), and he set them an example (1 Peter 2:23). But the Corinthians were far from basic Christian principles. Indeed, they were far behind the best Greek thought, for Plato can say that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong."²⁶
- "Most legal actions on part of Christians are predicated on 'rights.'²⁷

9. Calvin's *Institute*

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10. Carson's *The Cross and Christian Ministry* and Class Notes

- Nothing

11. Notes from Garland

- "To bring a suit against a brother before judges who are unbelievers implies that the church has no one wise enough to settle petty disputes."²⁸
- "The vice list which marks the behavior of the unjust, contains an implicit warning: Do not commit these sins lest you lose your inheritance."²⁹

12. Notes from Constable

- In view of the context the "neighbor" (NASB) must be a fellow Christian. The "unrighteous" or "ungodly" (NIV) contrasts with the "saints" and refers to an unbeliever (v. 6). When people had disputes with each other in Corinth and wanted official arbitration, they went to the *bema* (judgment seat) in the center of town.
- 6:4 The first part of this verse seems to refer to the disputes and judicial procedures the Christians should have used with one another rather than to the heathen law courts. The

²¹ Fee, p. 245.

²² Fee, p. 248.

²³ Morris, p. 90.

²⁴ Morris, p. 92.

²⁵ Morris, p. 92-3.

²⁶ Morris, p. 93.

²⁷ Fee, p. 238.

²⁸ Garland, p. 193.

²⁹ Garland, p. 194.

context seems to argue for this interpretation. Paul was speaking here of Christians resolving their differences in the church rather than in the civil law courts.

- 5-6 What was to the Corinthians' shame? It was that by going into secular courts to settle their church problems they seemed to be saying that there was no one in their church wise enough to settle these matters. Certainly they could count on the Holy Spirit to give them the wisdom they needed to do this (cf. John 14:26; 16:13).
- 7 5 The shame of people who professed to love one another and put the welfare of others before their own suing each other was a defeat in itself. This defeat was far more serious than any damages they may have had to pay. It would be better to suffer the wrong or the cheating than to fight back in such an unchristian way (Matt. 5:39-40; 1 Pet. 2:19-24).

13. Notes from Blomberg

- Blomberg rightly points out that “there is a difference between seeking justice for others who have been disenfranchised and trying to avenge wrongs done against ourselves.”³⁰
- Verses 7-8 stress a cardinal component of Christian living more generally—the voluntary relinquishing of one’s right in order to serve others.”³¹
- “Secular legal theory too has at times recognized that the very process of bringing suit almost inevitably dehumanizes all the parties involved.”³²
- “Our society rivals and possibly even surpasses ancient Corinth in its passion for suing people.”³³
- “On a broader level, the whole concept of relinquishing one’s rights seems anathema to a culture immersed in asserting them. Women’s rights, civil rights, gay rights, liberation theology, even so called ‘inalienable rights’ of the American constitution all contain important Christian components but also owe their existence to significant secular and even anti-Christian influences.”³⁴
- The concern is not to wash our dirty laundry in view of the public.

14. Notes from Harold Mare (Expositors)

- In modern life this biblical principle allows for church cases to be brought into civil courts to determine the extent of the rights of the congregation, as for example, their right to own and retain their own church property. What concerned Paul was that the Corinthians were failing to exercise their prerogative in settling such cases themselves, a prerogative they would exercise at the Second Coming and in the eternal state (vv. 2, 3).

15. Thisleton

- "Since

³⁰ Blomberg, p. 119.

³¹ Blomberg, p. 120.

³² Blomberg, p. 120.

³³ Blomberg, p. 122.

³⁴ Blomberg, p. 122.

Scripture

- Deuteronomy 17:7 *The*

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

(NIV)

1 Cor 6:1 (NIV) If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints?

2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?

3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! {[4] Or matters, do you appoint as judges men of little account in the church?}

5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?

6 But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers!

7 The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?

8 Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers.

9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders

10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

(NASU)

1 Cor 6:1 (NASU) Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?

2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent [to constitute] the smallest law courts?

3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?

4 So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?

5 I say [this] to your shame. [Is it] so, [that] there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren,

6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

7 Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?

8 On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. [You do] this even to [your] brethren.

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

10 nor thieves, nor [the] covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

(RSV)

(The Message)

1-4 And how dare you take each other to court! When you think you have been wronged, does it make any sense to go before a court that knows nothing of God's ways instead of a family of Christians? The day is coming when the world is going to stand before a jury made up of followers of Jesus. If someday you are going to rule on the world's fate, wouldn't it be a good idea to practice on some of these smaller cases? Why, we're even going to judge angels! So why not these everyday affairs? As these disagreements and wrongs surface, why would you ever entrust them to the judgment of people you don't trust in any other way?

5-6 I say this as bluntly as I can to wake you up to the stupidity of what you're doing. Is it possible that there isn't one levelheaded person among you who can make fair decisions when disagreements and disputes come up? I don't believe it. And here you are taking each other to court before people who don't even believe in God! How can they render justice if they don't believe in the God of justice?

7-8 These court cases are an ugly blot on your community. Wouldn't it be far better to just take it, to let yourselves be wronged and forget it? All you're doing is providing fuel for more wrong, more injustice, bringing more hurt to the people of your own spiritual family.

9-11 Don't you realize that this is not the way to live? Unjust people who don't care about God will not be joining in his kingdom. Those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it, don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom. A number of you know from experience what I'm talking about, for not so long ago you were on that list. Since then, you've been cleaned up and given a fresh start by Jesus, our Master, our Messiah, and by our God present in us, the Spirit.